



Washington State Senator
35th Legislative District

Senator Tim Sheldon

2007 Session Newsletter



How to contact me

I appreciate your letters, calls and e-mails on legislative issues. Please let me know if I can help on matters before state agencies.

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Committees:

- Higher Education
- Transportation

Summer 2007

Dear Neighbors,

Thank you for allowing me to represent you in Olympia.

Every legislative session has its marquee issues. The 2007 Legislature will be remembered for no tax increases, but a 14 percent increase in spending.

I voted for a prudent transportation plan as well as a balanced capital budget for our schools and public infrastructure.

However, knowing how my constituents are struggling to make ends meet, I couldn't vote for a \$33 billion general fund budget with new programs and 3,800 new state employees. Projections show the state will be in real financial jeopardy if the economy softens.

Having served in Olympia for 17 sessions, I have never participated in a session with less meaningful discussion and debate on major issues. Passing 540 bills was more than any other session, roughly a 17% increase over the last twelve-year average. In the Senate, we took 799 recorded votes – a record. I was present for 792 of these votes. Inside, you'll find my voting record on some the issues lawmakers considered during the 2007 session.

During the interim, our office will be open and we are happy to address any concerns or ideas you may have. Some of the best ideas for legislation come from constituents. Please don't hesitate to contact my office if we can be of assistance. I look forward to hearing from you and seeing you in the district.

Sincerely,

Tim Sheldon
State Senator, 35th Legislative

Here's my voting record on the major issues of the 2007 session:



Tideland geoduck harvesting (HB 2220)

I voted YES

Our tremendous shellfish industry was targeted by naysayers who unsuccessfully fought to create controversy over geoduck harvesting and sustainable aquaculture practices. HB 2220 will ensure that stakeholders may weigh in with their issues while research provides a foundation for building sound policies for one of our district's largest and oldest industries.

PBDEs (HB 1024)

I voted YES

Polybrominated diphenyl ethers, also known as PBDEs, are toxic flame retardant additives which reduce a product's risk of fire. I voted for the bill because it was a harmful chemical issue and there are substitutes for flame retardants. The bill was signed into law.

Simple majority to authorize school levies (HJR 4204)

I voted NO

This bill amends the state constitution to allow a simple majority of voters to authorize a school levy. The bill removes the requirement of 40 percent of voters from the last general election for validation and drops the supermajority vote (60 percent) to 50 percent to pass levies. I voted no because I believe the state is stepping further away from its obligation to fund schools and passing more of the responsibility to the local citizens. Because it is a potential change to the state constitution, you will have the final say in November.

Volunteer fire fighters (SB 5511)

I voted YES



I sponsored SB 5511 because many of our state employees serve in other capacities, such as volunteer firefighters and volunteer emergency

responders. This bill allows volunteer emergency personnel to respond to a call of duty without the state creating roadblocks. The bill was drafted after a constituent, a state employee who also serves as a volunteer firefighter, came forward with the idea. The state has the option to grant the employee leave with or without pay. I introduced the bill in 2006; it was signed into law this year.



Puget Sound Partnership (SB 5372)

I voted YES

I support legislation that cleans up toxic waste, upholds water quality standards and protects Puget Sound. This new environmental legislation will better coordinate our efforts to improve water quality in marine waters. It builds on the good work done to protect Hood Canal. A major portion of southern Puget Sound and Hood Canal will be eligible for state funding for clean water projects.

Reporter Shield law (HB 1366)

I voted YES

Under current law, a journalist can be required by a court to disclose confidential sources he or she obtained while gathering news. Based on the First Amendment, Washington courts have ruled in favor of protection. The bill would grant protection only against disclosing a source; disclosure of notes and other materials would be subject to a judge's decision. I'm against any agency or organization's efforts to keep information from the public.

Homeowner Bill of Rights (Senate Bill 5550)

I voted NO

This bill would require a warranty on new homes, increasing the statute of limitation to sue homebuilders for construction defects from 6 years to 10. I voted no because this is overkill, hurting contractors, increasing frivolous lawsuits, and raising the cost of housing. This bill passed the Senate but died in the House.

Government transparency in permitting (SB 5508)

I voted YES



Obtaining timely and detailed information about a building permit should get easier

with this bill. Under the bill, city, county and state agencies will provide applicants with detailed timelines in permit decisions, including fees, completion of an application and reasons for denial, in writing. The bill passed both legislative chambers and was signed into law.

Family Medical Leave Act (SB 5726)

I voted NO

This bill would allow workers to take up to five weeks of paid leave to spend time with a newborn or a newly adopted child. The Senate bill allows an employee taking leave to receive up to \$250 a week, for a maximum of five weeks, funded by an employee tax. I voted no because in addition to creating a new tax, this hurts small businesses and creates a new, ninety person bureaucracy in Olympia. This bill eventually



passed the Legislature without a funding source, and will be revisited next year.

Rainy Day Fund (SJR 8206, SB 5311)

I voted YES

As the most trade-dependent state in the nation, economic fluctuations make us fiscally vulnerable, more so than any other state. **SJR 8206** and **SB 5311** would automatically put away 1 percent of annual state revenues into a budget stabilization account. This would guarantee some fiscal responsibility. By the same token, it should also be difficult to access. The money could be tapped if the governor declares a state of emergency or if forecasted job growth is determined to be less than 1 percent. However, voters would still need to agree to amend the state constitution for the bill to be implemented. You will decide the issue in November.

"Pick a Party" Primary (SB 5994)

Most Washington voters have disdain for the current Montana-style "pick-a-party" primary system. That's why I teamed up with the Washington State Grange and sponsored a bill that would remove partisan party labels on

the primary and general election ballots. Political parties would still be allowed to recruit and support candidates as they have always done. Citizens should have the right to vote for the person they believe will best represent their interests and not be forced to select a party label. Unfortunately, the bill never received a hearing. However, the U.S. Supreme Court has accepted the case to decide the constitutionality of the voter-approved "top-two" primary system. The decision should occur by July 2008.

NASCAR bill, Sonics bill, (SB 6040, SB 5986 respectively)

Known as the NASCAR bill, the legislation would have created a public speedway authority and a mechanism to finance a 950 acre race track in Kitsap County. The Sonics bill sought state funding for up to \$300 million in King County taxes to build a new professional basketball/convention facility. Neither of these bills came up for a vote. However, I would have voted **NO** on both bills. As I have said before, I absolutely oppose public financing of professional sports facilities. The state has more important priorities than to subsidize professional sports owners.

The Big Three: Operating, Capital and Transportation budgets

2007-09 \$33 billion operating budget (HB 1128)

I voted NO



This is irresponsible budgeting by the Legislature. I voted against the bill because the \$33 billion general

fund budget spends 14 percent more money than in the 2005-07 biennium. Instead of maintaining reasonable funding levels for current programs, the budget includes a host of new policy measures and creates 3,800 new bureaucracy jobs. We are spending way too much money. This budget is unsustainable if the economy takes even a slight dip.

2007-09 \$4.3 billion capital budget (HB 1092)

I voted YES

In the \$4.3 billion capital budget, the district is slated to receive more than \$58 million for improvement projects. Capital projects in the 35th Legislative District include:

\$13 million for improvements and upgrades at the Washington Corrections Center

\$6.6 million for a 100 bed expansion for Mission Creek Corrections Center near Belfair

\$10.3 million for sewer system upgrades protecting Hood Canal

\$7.1 million for acquisition of critical habitat in Kitsap and Mason counties

\$5.3 million for the Washington Youth Academy in Bremerton

\$5.1 million for building improvements attracting new jobs at the Grays Harbor Public Development Authority in Satsop

\$700,000 for the construction of Turning Pointe Domestic Violence Shelter in Shelton

\$400,000 for Belfair State Park improvements

2007-09 \$7.5 billion transportation budget

Transportation wasn't a partisan issue when I served as member of the House Transportation Committee years ago and it still isn't. As a current member of the Senate Transportation Committee, I have to remind other members that not all transportation problems are located in King, Pierce and Snohomish Counties. This budget focused on keeping improvement projects on schedule, and honoring promises to voters from both the 2003 Nickel Package and 2005 Transportation Partnership Act. Under the bipartisan plan, \$87 million in 35th District projects would continue moving forward, including:

IN MASON COUNTY:

\$16.1 million in safety and widening for Highway 3 through Belfair.

\$15 million for State Route 3 / Belfair Bypass to create a new alignment, relieving congestion and decrease traffic delays.

\$13 million to replace the Purdy Creek Bridge on US 101, an increase of \$1.2 million.

\$3.9 million to complete the interchange at Highway 101 and Highway 3, scene of several severe accidents.

\$2 million for unstable slopes on US 101/Lilliwaup vicinity.

IN KITSAP COUNTY

\$2.6 million to add lanes on State Route 3 from Imperial Way to Sunnyslope.

\$1.3 million to pave State Route 3 from vicinity Dawn Drive to vicinity E. Homestead Drive.

\$39,000 to install new cable guardrail in the median on State Route 3, from Kitsap Way to State Route 305.

IN GRAYS HARBOR COUNTY

\$107,000 for preventative maintenance surfacing ("chip seal") on State Route 8, Elma Rest stop.

\$89,000 for seismic retrofit on US 12 from 3rd Street Elma vicinity.

IN THURSTON COUNTY

\$1.8 million for seismic repairs and retrofitting of the Mudd Bay Bridges on State Route 8.

SPS#07-6600 ER, 6/07

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